TWO-LEGS

CARL EWALD

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BY

CARL EWALD

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TRANSLATED FROM THE DANISH

BY

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TWO-LEGS

I

THE OLD ANIMALS

It was once upon a time, many, many years ago.

And it was in the warm lands, where the sun shines stronger than here and the rain falls closer and all animals and all plants thrive better, because the winter does not stunt their growth.

The forest was full of life and noise.

The flies buzzed, the sparrow ate the flies and the hawk ate the sparrow. The bees crept into the flowers in search of honey, the lion roared

and the birds sang, the brook rippled and the grass grew. The trees stood and rustled, while their roots sucked saps from the earth. The flowers were radiant and fragrant.

Suddenly it became wonderfully still.

It was as though all held their breaths at once and listened and stared. The rustling of the trees ceased. The violet woke from her dreams and looked up in wonder. The lion raised his head and stood with one paw uplifted. The stag stopped grazing, the eagle rested high in the air on his wings, the little mouse ran out of his hole and pricked up his ears.

There came two through the forest who were different from the others, two whom no one had ever seen before.

They walked erect. Their foreheads were high, their eyes steady. They went hand in hand and looked around them as though they did not know where they were.

"Who, in the name of wonder, are these?" asked the lion.

"They are animals," said the stag. "They can walk. But how oddly they do it! Why don't they leap on all fours, seeing that they have four legs? Then they would get along much faster."

"Oh," said the snake, "I have no legs at all; and it seems to me I get along pretty fast."

"I don't believe they are animals," said the nightingale. "They have no feathers and no hair, except that bit on their heads."

"Scales would do quite as well,"

said the pike, popping his head out of the river.

"Some of us have to manage with our bare skin," said the earth-worm, quietly.

"They have no tails," said the mouse. "Never in their lives have they been animals!"

"I have no tail," said the toad. "And nobody can deny that I am an animal."

"Look!" said the lion. "Just look! One of them is taking up a stone in his fore-paws: I couldn't do that."

"But I could," said the orang-outang. "There's nothing in that. For the rest, I can satisfy your curiosity. Those two, in point of fact, are animals. They are husband and wife, their name is Two-Legs and they are distant relations of my own."

"Oh, really?" said the lion. "Then how is it they have no fur?"

"I daresay they've pawned it," said the orang-outang.

"Why don't you go and talk to them?" asked the lion.

"I don't know them," replied the orang-outang. "And I am not at all anxious to have anything to do with them. I have only heard of them. You must know, they are a sort of very inferior, second-rate ape. I shall be pleased to hand them an orange now and again, but I won't undertake the smallest responsibility for them."

"They look very nice," said the lion. "I shouldn't mind trying what they taste like."

"Pray do, for all that I care," said the orang-outang. "They will never

be a credit to the family and, sooner or later, they will come to a bad end."

The lion went towards them, as they came, but, when he stood before them, he suddenly lost courage. He could not understand this himself, for there was not a thing else in the forest that he feared. But the two new animals had such strange eyes and walked the earth so fearlessly that he thought they must possess some mysterious power which he could not perceive. There was nothing particular about their teeth; and their claws were not worth speaking of. But something about them there must be.

And so he hung his head and got out of their way.

"Why didn't you eat them?" asked the lioness

"I was not hungry," he answered.

He lay down to rest in the high grass and did as though he were no longer thinking of them. The other animals did the same, for he was their chief. But none of them meant it. They were all taken up with the new animals.

Meanwhile, Two-Legs and his wife walked on; and the farther they walked the more they wondered at the splendour of the world. They had no suspicion of the attention which they attracted and they did not see that all the animals were stealthily following in their tracks. Wherever they came, the trees put their tops together and whispered, the birds flew in the air above their heads and astonished eyes stared at them from every bush.

"We will live here," said Two-Legs and pointed to a wonderful little meadow, where the river flowed between flowers and grass.

"No, here!" cried his wife and ran into the adjoining wood, where the trees dispensed a deep shade and the moss was thick and soft.

"How strange their voices sound," said the nightingale. "They have more notes than I."

"If they were not so big, I should advise them to build a nest beside me in the rushes," said the reed-warbler.

The two new animals walked on and constantly found a place which was prettier than that which they had last seen; and they could not make up their minds to stay. Then they met the dog, who was limping

badly, as he had cut his foot on a sharp stone. He tried to run away from them, but could not. Mrs. Two-Legs took hold of him and looked at the injured foot.

"I'll help you, you poor fellow," she said. "Wait a minute. I hurt my own foot the other day and healed it with leaves."

The dog saw that she meant well by him. He waited patiently while she ran into the copsewood for leaves. Two-Legs patted him on the back and talked kindly to him. Then she came back with the leaves, put them on his foot and bound a tendril round them.

"Run away, now," she said. "To-morrow you'll be well again."

They went on, but the dog stood looking after them and wagging his

tail. The other animals came out of the bushes and copses.

"You've been talking to the strangers. What did they say? What are they like?" they all asked in chorus.

"They are better than the other animals in the forest," replied the dog. "They have healed my foot and patted my skin. I shall never forget it."

"They have healed the dog's foot. . . . They have patted the dog's skin. . . ."

It ran from mouth to mouth through the forest. The trees whispered it to one another, the flowers sighed and nodded, the lizards ran round with the story and the nightingale set it to music. The new animals went on and thought no more of the dog.

At last, however, they were so tired that they sat down. They stooped over the spring and drank and laughed at their own image in the water. They plucked juicy fruits from the trees and ate them. When the sun went down, they lay down to rest in the grass and went to sleep with their arms about each other's neck. A little way off, the dog, who had followed in their footsteps, lay with his head on his paws, watching them.

The round full moon shone straight down upon them. She also shone in the big face of the ox, who stood looking at them.

"Boo!" said the ox.

"Bo!" said the moon. "What are you staring at?"

"I'm looking at those two who are

lying sleeping there," said the ox. "Do you know them?"

"I believe something of the kind used to crawl about my surface years and years ago," replied the moon. "But I'm not sure. My memory has become very bad in the last hundred thousand years or so. It is quite as much as I can do to concentrate my thoughts upon my celestial course."

"Yes, thinking is not my strong point either," said the ox. "But I am frightened."

"Of those two over there?" asked the moon.

"I don't know why," said the ox, "but I can't bear them."

"Then trample them to death!" cried the moon.

"I dare not," said the ox. "Not by

myself. But perhaps I can persuade some one to help me."

"That's your look-out," said the moon. "It's all one to me."

And she sailed on. But the ox stood and chewed the cud and thought and got no further.

"Are you asleep?" asked the sheep, sticking out her long face beside the ox.

And suddenly the whole meadow came to life.

All the animals were there who had followed the two on their walk. There were both those who sleep by day and hunt at night and those who do their work while the sun shines. None of them was now thinking of working or resting. None thought of hurting the others. The lion and the stag, the wolf and the sheep, the cat

and the mouse and the horse and the ox and many others stood side by side on the grass. The eagle sat in a tree-top, surrounded by all the little birds of the forest. The orang-outang sat on one of the bottom branches eating an orange. The hen stood on a mound beside the fox, the duck and the goose lay in the brook and stuck out their necks.

"Now that we are all here together, let us discuss the matter," said the lion.

"Have you had enough to eat?" asked the ox.

"Quite," answered the lion. "To-night we shall keep the peace and be friends."

"Then I move that we forthwith and without more ado kill those two strange animals," said the ox.

"What in the wide world is the matter with you?" asked the lion. "Generally you're such a peaceful fellow, grazing, attending to your business and not hurting a living thing. What makes you so bloodthirsty all of a sudden?"

"I can't account for it," said the ox. "But I have a decided conviction that we ought to kill them with the least possible delay. They bring misfortune. They are evil. If you don't follow my advice, rely upon it, one day you will all regret it."

"I agree with the ox," cried the horse. "Bite them to death! Kick them to pieces! And the sooner the better!"

"Kill them, kill them!" cried the sheep, the goat and the stag, with one voice.

"Yes, do, do!" screamed the duck, the goose and the hen.

"I have never heard anything like this in my life," said the lion, looking round in surprise at the crowd. "It's just the most peaceable and cowardly animals in the forest that want to take the strangers' lives. What have they done to you? What are you afraid of?"

"I can't tell you any more than the ox can," said the horse. "But I feel that they are dangerous. I have such pains in my loins and legs."

"When I think of those two, I feel as if I were being skinned," said the ox. "I feel teeth biting into my flesh."

"I feel something pulling at my udders," said the cow.

"I feel cold, as if all my wool were shorn off," said the sheep.

"I have a feeling as if I were being roasted before the fire and eaten," said the goose.

"So have I! So have I!" screamed the duck and the hen.

"This is most remarkable," said the lion. "I have never heard anything like it and I can't understand your feelings. What can these strangers do to you? They go about naked among us, eat an apple and an orange and don't do the least harm. They go on two poor legs, whereas you have four, so that you can run away from them anyhow. You have horns and claws and teeth: what are you afraid of?"

"You'll be sorry one day," said the ox. "The new animals will be the ruin of us all. The danger threatens you as well as the rest of us."

"I see no danger and know no fear," said the lion, proudly. "But is there really not one of you to take the strangers' part?"

"If they did not belong to my family, I would do so gladly," said the orang-outang. "But it looks bad to recommend one's own relations. Let them go their way and starve. They are quite harmless."

"Then I at least will say a good word for them," said the dog. "My foot is almost well again and I believe that they are cleverer than all the rest of you put together. I shall never forget what they did for me."

"That's right, cousin," said the lion. "You're a fine fellow and one can see that you come of a good stock. I don't believe that these Two-Legs are dangerous and I have no inten-

tion of doing them any harm. To be sure, if I meet them one day when I am hungry, I shall eat them. That's a different thing. Hunger knows no law. But to-night I have had enough to eat and I am going home to bed. Good-night, all of you!"

Then none of the animals said another word. They went away as noiselessly as they had come. The night came to an end and the day broke in the east.

Then, suddenly, the ox and the horse and the sheep and the goat came galloping over the meadow. Behind them, as fast as they could, came the goose and the duck and the hen. The ox was at their head and rushed with lowered horns to the place where the strangers lay sleeping.

But then the dog sprang up and

barked like mad. The two new animals woke and leapt to their feet. And, when they stood there, tall and slender, with their white limbs and their steady eyes, and the sun shone down upon them, the old animals were seized with terror and ran back the way they came.

"Thank you, friend," said Two-Legs and stroked the dog.

Mrs. Two-Legs looked to his bad foot and spoke to him in her pretty voice. He licked their hands with delight.

Then the new animals bathed in the river. And then Two-Legs climbed up an apple-tree to get some breakfast for himself and his wife.

In the tree sat the orang-outang gnawing at an apple.

"Get out of that!" said Two-Legs,

in a threatening voice. "This is my tree and don't you forget it. Don't you dare to touch a single apple!"

"Goodness gracious me!" said the orang-outang. "What a tone to take up! And I who defended you last night, when all the other animals wanted to kill you!"

"Get out, you disgusting ape!" said Two-Legs.

He broke a branch off the tree and gave the orang-outang a couple of such lusty cracks with it that he ran off crying into the forest.

II

MRS. TWO-LEGS HAS A SON

THE days passed.

Things were busy in the forest, both above and below. All the wives had eggs or young and all the husbands had their work cut out to provide food for their families. Everyone attended to his business and took no heed of his neighbour, except when he wanted to eat him.

The new animals had taken up their abode on an island in the river.

This was because the lion had met them one day on the borders of the copsewood. He had got out of their way, as on the first occasion; but he

had given them such a look that Mrs. Two-Legs trembled with fright.

"He'll eat us one day," she said. "I dare not sleep in the meadow again."

Then Two-Legs discovered the little island and built a hut on it of branches and grass. Every day, they waded through the river and went to gather fruit in the forest. At night, they slept in their hut. The other animals had gradually all got used to them and spoke of them but seldom. Only the dog never forgot to run down to the river every morning to look across at the island and bark "Good-morning!" to them. And the orang-outang slandered them wherever he went.

"Who minds about that?" asked the stag. "They're relations; and we all know what that means."

One night, a child was born to the new animals.

"The Two-Legs have had a young one," said the sparrow, who went everywhere and always had some news to tell.

"Really! I must go quick and have a look at the baby," said Mrs. Nightingale. "My eggs will keep warm for five little minutes."

"Mrs. Fox has gone there herself, so I can leave my goslings alone for a moment," said the goose.

Down by the river were a vast number of visitors and enquirers.

All the wives had run away from hearth and home to have a look at the Two-Legs. Mrs. Two-Legs was sitting on the grass in front of the hut with her child at her breast. Two-Legs sat beside her, eating an orange.

"He's just the same as other husbands," observed Mrs. Stag.

"There are some who are worse," said Mrs. Mole. "My husband eats the children, if I don't look after them."

"Husbands are mere rubbish," said Mrs. Spider. "I ate mine, as soon as I had laid my eggs."

"Do spare us those gruesome stories," said Mrs. Nightingale. "Surely he might sing to her a little. That's what my husband does."

"Oh, but look at the baby! Isn't he sweet?" exclaimed Mrs. Reed-Warbler.

"Poor little thing!" said Mrs. Stag. "He can't even stand on his legs and the sparrow was saying that he was born at eleven o'clock last night. When my fawn was an hour old, he

was gambolling merrily over the meadow."

"There's no sense in carrying a poor little mite like that in one's arms," said Mrs. Kangaroo. "If he were mine, he should stay snugly in my pouch until he knew how to behave himself. But probably the poor woman hasn't even got a pouch."

"At least he can see!" said Mrs. Fox. "My children are blind for quite nine days."

"Don't forget that they are poor people," said the orang-outang. "It's not so easy, when poor people have children. The police ought to forbid it."

"Stuff!" said Mrs. Nightingale. "It's a dear little baby, as any mother can see. Hi! Mrs. Two-Legs! You must be sure to feed him on mag-

gots. Then he'll grow up nice and fat."

"And, for goodness' sake, sit on him at night!" cried Mrs. Reed-Warbler. "Else he'll catch cold."

"Don't mind what any of them say!" cried Mrs. Stag. "You stick to the milk! That's good enough. And put him down on the grass and let him run about. You had much better make him used to it from the start."

Mrs. Two-Legs looked at her baby and did not listen to what they said. He had now finished drinking and began to crow and to kick about with his little legs and arms. Two-Legs took him and lifted him high in the air and laughed at him.

"Isn't he sweet?" said Mrs. Reed-Warbler.

"He's all that," said Mrs. Stag.

"But his parents are very self-sufficient. They won't look at any one else." And she called across to the island. "It's all right, Mrs. Two-Legs! You go or with the milk. And, if you run short, come to me. My only fawn died the other day, so I have plenty!"

Then they all hurried home again, lest their husbands should come and find out that they had been gossiping.

"I am going to fetch a couple of oranges or something of the sort," said Two-Legs. "It may be some time before I'm back, for we have eaten everything on the trees round about here."

"Be as quick as you can," replied his wife. "You know that I don't like being alone at this time."

He waded through the river and went into the forest. After a long while, he came back, having found only a couple of poor little fruits. He was annoyed at this and so was his wife, for she was hungry. Then they sat and discussed whether they could not find something else that was fit to eat in the neighbourhood. For, once the evening had come, they did not dare leave the island.

"Last evening," said Two-Legs, "I saw the otter catch a big fish in the river here and eat him. Perhaps we could do the same."

"Do try," said Mrs. Two-Legs. "One thing is certain, I must have some food."

He went out into the river and with his hands caught a great pike, who was swimming just past him, not

dreaming of danger. He had so often seen Two-Legs wading through the river and Two-Legs had never looked at him. But now Two-Legs flung him on the island and there lay the pike gaping and gasping for breath and yelling with might and main:

"Hi! . . . Ho! . . . Murder! . . . Help!"

But he was soon dead. Two-Legs and his wife ate him and found him excellent.

"Get me another fish like that tomorrow, will you?" said Mrs. Two-Legs. "Frankly speaking, I was getting rather tired of those apples."

Next day, Two-Legs went into the river again. He was not long before he saw another fine fish, but, just as he wanted to catch it, the otter snapped it away in front of his nose.

"Get out of my river, you thief!" shouted Two-Legs and struck at him.

"Whom are you calling thief?" said the otter, snarling and showing his white teeth. "I rather thought the river was mine. I was living here long before you came."

Two-Legs leapt on shore and picked up some big stones and flung them at the otter. One of them caught him on the snout and made it bleed. Then he hid in his hole and Two-Legs caught another fish and took it home to his wife. But, when the otter came out again at night, the orang-outang was sitting there and nodding to him:

"I have seen all," said the orang-outang. "I was sitting in the tree over there and saw him throw the stone at you. The water turned quite

red with your blood. He ill-treated me once too. He said the apples were his and drove me out of the tree with a stick. And to think that we are relations!"

"If I could only get at him!" said the otter. "But I am too small."

"All in good time," answered the orang-outang. "We shall be even with him yet."

III

BLOOD!

THE sun was blazing and the ground was shockingly dry.

The trees and bushes hung their leaves and the grass was parched and yellow, so that the ox could hardly find a green tuft to eat. The water in the river was so low that the fish swam along the bottom and the brook had stopped running. The animals lay in the shadow and gasped for breath. In many places, both flowers and animals had died. Two-Legs and his wife and child were not much better off.

The only one who was really happy

was the snake. He stretched himself in the sun and thought life delightful.

"Shine away, little sun," he said. "The hotter the better. I am only just beginning to feel alive."

But one day the rain came.

It was not the sort of rain against which one can put up an umbrella or take shelter in a doorway and wait until it stops. It poured down from the clouds so that one could not see one's hand before one's face and it rained day after day, as though it would never end. It rattled and pattered and clattered on the dry leaves so that one could not hear a sound. The river flowed again and the brook woke from its trance and sang as it had never sung before. The whole earth was like a thirsty mouth that

drank and drank and could never quench its thirst.

And a great gladness reigned on every hand.

The trees stretched themselves and spread out and sent forth new shoots and the grass sprang fresh and green from the ground. The flowers blossomed anew, the frogs croaked so that they were heard all over the forest and the fish flapped merrily with their tails. Two-Legs and his family sat in front of their leafy hut and rejoiced with the rest.

But it went on raining.

The river overflowed its banks and Two-Legs feared lest his island should go under in the waves. The water soaked through the roof of the hut until there was not a dry spot inside.

"The baby is cold," said Mrs. Two-Legs.

They decided to leave the island and crossed the river with great difficulty, for it was now very deep. They waded through the damp meadow and carried the child by turns. Then they found a tree which was so contrived that they could live in it. They twisted the branches together and built a roof and stopped up the holes as best they could with grass and moss; and this was their new house.

"The water can't reach us here," said Two-Legs.

"But it's raining through the roof," said his wife. "The baby is cold and so am I."

"It's just as I always said," observed the orang-outang. "They have

no hide or fur or anything and they'll come to a terrible end."

"You ought to have fed your little one on maggots, Mrs. Two-Legs," said Mrs. Nightingale. "Then he would have thrived better. My young ones already are almost as big as myself."

"You ought to have put him in the meadow and let him jump about, as I advised you," said Mrs. Stag. "Then he would have been able to shift for himself by now."

"You should sit on him," said Mrs. Reed-Warbler. "That's how I keep my young ones warm."

Mrs. Two-Legs said nothing, but looked at her boy, who was shivering with cold.

"It's really a horribly spoilt child," said Mrs. Hedgehog. "Of course,

what must be must be; and, once you have brought children into the world, you have to give them a decent bringing-up. But a great big thumping lout like that, of six months old, still at his mother's breast: fie, for shame! What he wants is a good beating and then turn him loose into the world!"

"There's nothing to be done with people like that," said Mrs. Stag. "They won't use their common sense; and, as they have made their bed, they must lie in it."

Then they went away.

Mrs. Two-Legs sat in the tree and the rain poured down and the baby cried with cold.

"Look at that silly sheep in the meadow," said Mrs. Two-Legs. "She's warm and comfortable in her

thick fleece, while my poor dear little boy lies here shivering."

Two-Legs heard what she said, but made no reply. He sat silent for a while and thought over things. Then he climbed down from the tree and sat on the ground a little and thought again. The rain splashed and clattered. Up in the tree, the little baby cried with cold. Down in the meadow, the sheep moved about and grazed.

Then Two-Legs rose and went up to the sheep. On his way, he took a sharp stone and hid it in his hand. He went very slowly and looked to one side, so as not to frighten the sheep. Then suddenly, with a bound, he caught hold of her:

"Baa! Baa! Murder! Help! I'm dying!" cried the sheep.

Two-Legs struck her on the fore-

head with the stone and she fell to the ground. Then he strangled her with his hands, caught her by the fleece and dragged her to the tree where he had made his home.

He cut a hole in her hide with the sharp stone and began to pull it off with his finger-nails. His wife came down and helped him. They used their teeth also, to finish the work more quickly, and, presently, they stopped and looked at each other with beaming eyes:

"How delicious!" he said.

"Wonderful!" said she. "Let us hurry now and give the boy the fleece. Then we will go on eating."

Two-Legs drank the blood of the sheep and bit into the meat.

"I feel stronger than I ever did before," he said. "Let the lion come

now, then he'll have me to deal with."

They wrapped the fleece round the child, who went comfortably to sleep at once. Then they dragged up the rest of the sheep into their house in the tree and sat down to eat. Every bite they took made them feel braver and stronger. They gave no more thought to cold or rain, but sat and talked of the future as they had never talked before.

"I should like to have a sheepskin like that for myself," said she.

"So you shall," said he, gnawing a bone. "Unless we find another animal that has a still softer and warmer skin. I want a fur too. . . . I say, we might cover the roof with sheepskins; that would keep out the rain. I will go out to-morrow and find

some more sheep and kill them and bring them home."

"Then we'll eat them," said Mrs. Two-Legs.

"I should think so!" said he. "We'll eat meat every day. What a good thing that I thought of it, for the fish in the river were already growing afraid of me!"

"Mind you don't meet with an accident," said she.

"That's all right," he said. "I'll go down to the river the first thing in the morning and pick out some sharp stones, in case I should lose the one I have. And, look here, I'll tell you what: I'll fasten one of those sharp stones to the end of a stick, with a shoot of some kind or other; a long stick, do you see? Then I need not go up to the sheep to hit them. I

can throw the stone. For, of course, they will be afraid of me as soon as they hear that I have killed one of them. . . ."

While they were talking like this, all the animals of the forest had gathered in the meadow, just as on the first night when the new animals arrived.

"Two-Legs has killed the sheep!" cried the sparrow and hurried on with her news, drenched and rumpled as she was with the rain.

"Two-Legs has murdered the sheep and the ox and the goat!" screamed the crow and flapped her wet wings.

"Softly!" said the ox. "I'm alive still, thank goodness, though I'm quite prepared for the worst."

"Two-Legs has killed all the animals in the forest . . . he's sitting

in the meadow eating the lion," whispered the reeds to one another.

Then all the animals rushed down to the meadow to hear the exact state of affairs. The lion stood in their midst, with his head proudly raised.

"What's all this noise about?" he asked.

"May I speak?" said the orang-outang, holding up one finger. "I was sitting in the palm-tree over there and saw the whole thing. It was terrible."

"What a mean fellow you are!" said the lion. "You're giving evidence against your own relations."

"Very distant," replied the orang-outang. "Exceedingly distant. I will remind you that I expressly refused to take any responsibility for these Two-Legs, who only bring disgrace

upon the family. Well, I was sitting in the tree and saw him come running up, fling himself on the sheep and strangle her. Then he dragged the poor beast to the tree in which he is living. I crept up behind him and saw him skin her. The woman helped him and then they climbed up the tree and feasted."

"Is that all?" asked the lion. "I've eaten plenty of sheep in my time, though I prefer deer on the whole. Why shouldn't Two-Legs help himself to a bit of meat if he likes?"

"If I may speak, I should like to remind you of what I said when we last met," said the ox. "It's easy for you to talk like that, for Two-Legs can't do you any harm. It's we others that he eats. Still, you had better look out. He may become a danger-

ous competitor. Supposing he gets a large family of children and they all take to eating mutton?"

"Then there's always beef left!" said the lion and laughed and showed his terrible teeth.

"Just so," said the ox and cautiously took a step backward. "The oxen will get their turn, now that he's tasted blood. He looks awfully greedy. And I feel as if he had eaten me already."

"Humph!" said the lion. "There may be something in that. I don't like beating about the bush. Let us go and have a word or two with the fellow."

He moved on and the orang-outang skipped along eagerly in front of him.

"This way, this way!" he said.

The lion stood under the tree where Two-Legs had made his home. All the other animals of the forest had followed him and stood listening and staring.

"Two-Legs!" roared the lion with his mighty voice.

It sounded like thunder and they all started with fear. The lion lashed his tail and looked up at the tree. Not a sound came from it. He called out again, but there was no answer.

"The impudent beggars!" said the orang-outang.

"Perhaps they are dead," said the nightingale. "Perhaps they have over-eaten themselves with the sheep."

"You don't die of eating too much, but of eating too little," said the pig,

who kept on rooting in the ground with his snout, in search of something for himself to eat.

Then the lion roared for the third time; and the noise was so loud that a tiny little finch tumbled off her twig right into the jaws of the snake, who swallowed her before any one had uttered a sound; and nobody ever got wind of the story.

And now Two-Legs appeared at the top of the tree.

He had been fast asleep after the hearty meal which he had enjoyed; and he was furious at being roused. His hair hung about his face in disorder and his eyes were bloodshot and his mouth covered with foam.

"Who dares disturb my sleep?" he shouted.

"I do: the lion."

"The lion, the king of beasts," they all cried, respectfully, with one voice.

"I am king in my own house," said Two-Legs. "Be off, I want to sleep."

"He is defying the lion. . . . He is mad. . . . I won't give a penny for his life!" cried the animals.

But Two-Legs took the thigh-bone of the sheep, aimed it and flung it with all his might at the lion. It hit the king of beasts in the middle of the forehead. He uttered a frightful roar. All the animals rushed terrified across the meadow. The lion ran in their midst, constantly roaring, so that it echoed all over the forest.

But Two-Legs lay down quietly to sleep and slept until broad daylight.

When he woke and had climbed down the tree, the dog lay gnawing

the bone which Two-Legs had flung at the lion. The dog wagged his tail; Two-Legs stroked him and gave him another bone.

"Will you be my servant and friend?" asked Two-Legs.

"Gladly," said the dog. "You have been kinder to me than the others and you are stronger and cleverer than they."

"Very well," said Two-Legs. "Then you shall keep watch over me and mine and help me when I go hunting and bear me company."

IV

TIME PASSES

THE rainy season went by, the sun recovered his strength and rain and sunshine came and went by turns. Time passed, as it must and will pass.

The Two-Legs family were now living in a new house, which was better than either the leafy hut on the island or the dwelling up in the apple-tree.

It was a cave in the rocks, which Two-Legs had discovered on one of his rambles. It was cool in the warm weather and mild in the cold, it was sheltered against the rain and it could be closed with a big stone at

night or when danger threatened. Two-Legs had hung the walls with skins and carpeted the floor with moss and now felt comfortably at home with his family and the dog.

He had plenty to do, for the family had increased. He now had three children, who were doing excellently well and eating like wolves. He had had to be careful since the night when he had flung the bone at the lion's head, for not only had he made an enemy of the king of beasts, but most of the other animals of the forest looked upon him with suspicion.

And they were well-advised, for Two-Legs had become a mighty hunter, in no way inferior to the lion himself.

In the back room of his cave he kept two big spears and one little

one which his eldest son was already able to use very cleverly. They lay in wait craftily for their prey, just as the lion and the other hunters of the forest did. The dog drove the game towards them and they threw their spears and killed it.

"He's a better hunter than I," said the lion, one evening, to his wife. "He got a young deer with his spear to-day that I had picked out for myself."

"Why didn't you catch her yourself?" asked the lioness.

"I was crawling up to her in the grass," he replied. "But, before I could make my spring, Two-Legs had killed her. He sent his spear through her neck and she fell dead on the spot."

"Then why didn't you take her

from him after he had killed her?" asked the lioness again.

"He had another spear in his hand," said the lion. "And his youngling had one also. The spear is a thing I don't understand. They who are struck by it fall down and die."

"You're afraid of Two-Legs," sneered the lioness. "He's the king of the forest, not you. If your son proves as big a coward as yourself, we're done for."

The lion said nothing, but lay staring before him with his yellow eyes.

But, a little before daybreak, he stole up to Two-Legs' cave, hid in the bushes and waited patiently until the stone was rolled away. This happened immediately after sunrise. The lion made ready to leap. He saw blood before his eyes and sprang, almost

without thinking, upon the first form that appeared, struck it down with his powerful claws and carried it back with a bound into the bushes.

A terrible scream brought Two-Legs to the entrance of the cave. He stood holding a spear in either hand. The lion saw that he had not killed his enemy, but only one of his children. He let go the corpse and prepared to make a fresh spring. Two-Legs now saw him among the leaves. He flung one spear and missed him. Then he threw the other, but the lion was gone, with great bounds.

With tears and lamentations, Two-Legs and his wife bore the dead child into the cave. The lion, hurried by fear, fled through the forest. Wherever he came, the terrified animals fell aside.

"The lion is flying from Two-Legs," announced the sparrow.

And the rumour spread through the whole forest and grew.

"Two-Legs has wounded the king of beasts with his spear," screamed the crow.

"Two-Legs has killed the lion and is hunting the lioness," squeaked the mouse.

And the lion fled on.

He rushed past his lair, as though he dared not look his wife in the face. He did not come home until late at night.

"Are you still alive?" asked the lioness, scoffing. "The whole forest believes you dead. And what about Two-Legs?"

"I have killed one of his young," answered the lion, angrily.

"What's the good of that?" asked she.

Then he caught her a box on the ear the like of which she had never had before, lay down and stared before him with his yellow eyes.

But the animals in the forest all wondered and whispered to one another:

"The lion is afraid. . . . The lion runs away from Two-Legs."

"Didn't I tell you so?" said the ox. "We ought to have killed him then and there."

"Ah, yes!" said the horse. "If the lion had only taken our advice!"

"Ah, yes!" sighed the duck and the goose and the hen.

But the orang-outang went to one side in the forest and reflected:

"My cousin is not such a fool as

I thought," said he to himself. "I really don't know why I shouldn't go and do the same. I am like him, but have many advantages which he has not; and I ought to do at least as well as he."

He took a stick and tried if he could walk like Two-Legs. He succeeded quite nicely and then he made for the other animals. He lifted his stick, yelled and made terrible eyes. But the animals crowded round and laughed at him. The fox snatched the stick from his hand, the stag butted him in the back, the sparrow behaved uncivilly on his head and they all made such fun of him that he ran away and hid in the copsewood, where it was thickest.

But the next morning the animals had fresh food for thought.

They saw Two-Legs carry the corpse into the forest and build a great heap of stones over it. His wife picked the reddest flowers and laid them on the stones.

"Well, I never!" said the nightingale. "When another dies, he's left, if you please, to lie where he falls. But as much fuss is made about this brat as if his memory were to last for all eternity! I don't even know what has become of my living children of last year, not to speak of the poor little chap who fell out of the nest and broke his neck."

"You just wait. There's worse to come," said the ox.

And it came. For, a week later, something happened that enraged the animals of the forest more than all that had gone before. Mrs. Two-

Legs saw a splendid bird of paradise sitting in a tree.

"What wonderful feathers!" she said. "If I could only have a tuft like that to wear in my hair!"

Two-Legs, who wanted to do everything to console her for the death of the child, at once went out with his spear and soon came back with the dead bird of paradise. She pulled out his feathers and stuck them in her hair and thought she looked charming; and Two-Legs thought so too.

"Now this is really too bad," said the nightingale. "To kill a bird only to adorn his wife with the feathers! Did you ever in your born days! It's well for me that I'm grey and ugly."

The widow of the bird of paradise, followed by a great host, went off to the lion.

"The new animals have killed my husband," she said. "Here am I left a widow with four cold eggs. Now that my bread-winner is killed, I can't stay at home and sit on the eggs, unless I want to die of hunger. So I left them, to look for some food. When I returned, they were cold and dead. I have come to demand vengeance upon the murderer."

"What can I say?" said the lion. "There are so many widows in the forest. I myself don't ask if the animals that I kill, when I am hungry, have wives and children at home."

"He didn't do it because he was hungry," said the widow of the bird of paradise. "He did it only to present his wife with a tuft of feathers for her hair."

"What's he to do when his wife asks

him?" said the lion. "It's no joke to fall out with the missis."

Some of the animals laughed. But most of them shook their heads and thought it a stupid jest, unworthy of the king of beasts.

The next day, the animals of the forest spoke of nothing but Two-Legs. They one and all had something to complain of.

"He took my whole nest, the other day, with seventeen new-laid eggs in it," said the hen.

"There are no fish left in the river," said the otter. "And one gets bludgeoned into the bargain."

"One can no longer graze in peace in the meadows," said the stag.

But, if sorrow and terror reigned among the large and important animals, the small and poor animals

were just as glad and, in fact, were highly amused at the misfortunes of their betters.

"Why should we care?" asked the fly. "Let the big ones eat one another up, as they please: it doesn't concern us in any case. And I, for my part, would rather have Two-Legs than the nightingale."

"No one is safe," said the bee. "He took my honey yesterday."

"Yes," said the earth-worm. "And, the day before that, he took my own brother, stuck him on a hook and caught a perch with him."

V

TWO-LEGS ENLARGES HIS POSSESSIONS

Two-legs sat thinking outside his cave. The dog lay at his feet asleep. Indoors, Mrs. Two-Legs was busy preparing breakfast.

Two-Legs was in a bad temper, for he had had bad hunting.

The day before, he had scoured the forest without coming upon any game whatever and, that morning, he had done no better.

The animals had become afraid of him. His spear had reduced their numbers so greatly that they fled the moment they saw him come in the distance. They knew the hours when he went hunting and they hid from

him. They posted sentries, who warned them with loud cries when he or the dog came in sight. There was not a stag nor an ox nor a sheep nor a goat in the country that lay nearest to the cave. Scarcely ever did an animal graze in the meadow down below, in front of it. They had all retired to where the forest grew thickest and where he could only penetrate with difficulty. Nor did it give him any pleasure to hunt up there, where the lion might so easily be lying in ambush.

"Things are looking bad, Trust," he said to the dog. "We must invent something new."

He sat and sharpened his knives and axes, which he had made out of flint, and then Mrs. Two-Legs came out with the breakfast, which con-

sisted only of apples and nuts. There was not even a fish to be had. The fish disappeared as soon as they saw Two-Legs' reflection in the water.

"I say," said Two-Legs, suddenly. "It would be much easier if I caught a couple of sheep and we kept them here in the cave. Then they would have lambs, which we could kill, and I need not continually and perpetually go hunting."

Mrs. Two-Legs thought this a good idea and, as they sat and talked about it, he recovered his temper. He wove a long rope of tendrils and then went off with his spear, the dog and two of his sons.

He stole along the borders of the forest until at last he caught sight of a sheep that was grazing in a distant meadow with two lambs. He

crept up to her on all fours, while Trust received orders to be quite still. When he was near enough, he flung the sling and was lucky enough to drop it just over the neck of the sheep. She bleated pitifully, but the noose held fast and tightened. Two-Legs, rejoicing, led the animal home and the two little lambs came after, for they did not know what else to do.

When he came home, he fastened the sheep to a tree in front of the cave. They ate one of the lambs and let the other live. The children ran down to the meadow and fetched armfuls of grass and the sheep ate and gave her lamb to drink.

"Do you mean to eat me too?" she asked Two-Legs that evening, as he sat outside the cave with his family, rejoicing over his work.

"No," he said, "I do not. I shall keep you with me and you shall be my servant, like the dog. To-morrow, I shall go out and catch your husband. Then you shall bear me plenty of lambs and I shall eat some and put some by, just as I happen to want them."

"You killed my sister and pulled off her skin," said the sheep.

"I know better now," said Two-Legs. "You shall see for yourself."

Mrs. Two-Legs came with a knife and cut off the old sheep's wool. The sheep struggled and yelled pitifully, but Two-Legs was determined and she was bound so tight that resistance was of no avail.

"Now I shall be cold myself when it rains," cried the sheep.

"Nonsense!" said Two-Legs. "When

it turns cold, I shall take you into my cave. I want your wool to make clothes of. It's no use your raising difficulties. If you're good and obedient, you shall have a better time with me than you ever had in your life."

At night, while Two-Legs slept, the sheep stood outside and thought over things. The ox stuck his head across the bushes and, a little afterwards, the stag stood there too and the horse and the goat and many of the other animals.

"What has he hit upon now?" asked the ox. "The sparrow says that he has fastened you up and cut off your wool."

"It's only too true," replied the sheep. "See for yourself how naked I am. He has eaten one of my lambs

and he is going to catch my husband to-morrow. But I must say that he has plucked grass for me, so that I have eaten my fill."

"It is awful," said the ox. "But it is only what we expected. Can't you get loose?"

"I've tried," said the sheep. "But it's no use. The more I pull, the tighter the noose gets round my neck. I am a prisoner and a prisoner I remain."

"Rather die than live a slave!" said the wolf. "I will do your lamb the service to eat her."

So saying, he caught hold of the lamb and bit her in the throat. The sheep screamed at the top of her voice, Two-Legs woke up and ran out and all the animals rushed away.

"You've been asleep, Trust," he

said. "We must see to-morrow how we can prevent these accidents. A nice thing, if I am to catch sheep for the wolf and fatten them for him to eat!"

And the next morning he thought of a remedy.

He and his sons went into the forest and felled some trees with their axes. Then they cut them into sharp stakes and, after they had prepared a quantity of these, they planted them in a circle outside the cave. Then they wove twigs between the stakes and, by sunset, they had a safe and strong pen over which no wolf could jump. Two-Legs put the sheep into it.

A few days later, he caught the ram with his sling. He went on hunting and soon the cow was there and the bull and their calves. The pen was

too small and he had to build a bigger one. The whole family went out to fetch grass, but could never bring in enough. The animals in the pen bleated and lowed.

At night, they talked together:

"Candidly speaking," said the sheep, "this life has its advantages. Down there, in the meadow, one never felt sure of one's life: first the lion was after one, then the wolf and the snake and the eagle, to say nothing of Two-Legs himself."

"There is something in that," said the cow. "But I can't stand the way in which Mrs. Two-Legs pulls at my udders. And then I am not so sure that they don't mean to kill me one fine day. There will be too many of us here before long."

VI

TWO-LEGS WANDERS

Two-legs began to find it difficult to provide grass for the many animals which he had in the pen.

He and his family had long plucked all that grew nearest the cave. Now they had to go a long way to find any and it was hard work getting it home.

"We shall have to move," he said to his wife. "We can't go on dragging the grass up for all the animals. And, as the grass won't come to us, we must go to the grass. We must go down to the meadow again. You will have to weave us a woollen tent. Then we will get all the skins we can

and dig stakes into the ground and hang the skins over them. That's the best way. And then the animals can go and graze all round the tent."

"But when they have eaten the grass in the meadow, what then?" asked Mrs. Two-Legs.

"Then we will pass on to the next one," answered Two-Legs. "We will pack up the tent, load it on the back of the cow and move on."

"If only the animals don't run away!" said she.

"Trust must help me to look after them," he replied. "And the boys. Then all will be well. They know us now and they let us stroke them. You shall see, they will soon be quite tame."

The next morning, they began to break up the pen.

"Is he going to set us free?" asked the cow.

"I don't want to go down to the meadow again," said the sheep and began to cry. "My legs are stiffer than they were and I can't walk as well as I used to. And my eye-sight is worse and I have hardly any scent left: it's so long since I used my senses. I want to stay with Two-Legs and obtain my food from his hand."

"You've already become a slave," said the cow. "And you don't deserve to be free. If I see my chance, I shall be off. He killed my calf yesterday: I shall never forgive him for that."

"Oh, well," said the sheep, "suppose we do lose a youngling or two and even risk losing our own lives:

what other fate could we expect in any case?"

"You have the soul of a serf!" said the cow, contemptuously.

Two-Legs had finished breaking down the pen. Meanwhile, his wife had packed up all their things. They loaded the cow with as much as she could carry, took up the rest themselves and started on their way to the meadow.

"My fears are now being realized," said the cow, groaning under the unwonted burden. "I am dead-tired in my loins and legs."

And hardly had they come down to where the meadow began, when she threw off her load and rushed away, followed by the bull. Trust flew after them, but they turned round and showed him their horns, which made

him run back with his tail between his legs. Two-Legs threw his spear at them, but missed them.

"Time will bring counsel," he said. "I shall go out and catch them again to-morrow. Let us pitch our tent now and arrange our things."

They set up the tent on a little hill from which they could look over the meadow. At the foot bubbled a spring. Trust drove the sheep into the meadow and home again. Two-Legs caught the hen, the goose and the duck and clipped their wings, so that they could not fly away. Gradually, he got a number of sheep and goats and a quantity of poultry.

When the animals had eaten all the grass in that place, he struck his tent again and moved to another meadow and so it went on. It appeared as if

he had quite forgotten the cow. But, one day, his wife reminded him of her:

"You must get the cow back for me," she said. "I need her milk so badly. And both I and the children want new calf-skin sandals."

Two-Legs took his spear, hung his sling round his neck and went off to look for the cow. When he had gone some way, he saw her in the distance; but she saw him too and trotted away at once. The horse, who was standing a little way off, looked at Two-Legs mockingly:

"You would like to have my four quick legs," he said.

"I should indeed!"

"It's well that there's something you can't manage," said the horse. "It's dangerous, otherwise, the way

you play at being master of the forest."

Two-Legs made no reply, but very quietly unwound his sling. Then, when he had got it right, he suddenly threw it over the horse's head. It fell round the animal's neck and he reared on his hind-legs and darted away wildly. But, at every leap he took, the noose drew tighter and Two-Legs did not let go the rope. At one moment, he was dragged along the ground and, at the next, recovered his feet again. He twisted the rope round his hand and it cut into his flesh till the blood came, but he did not let go.

At last the horse grew tired. He stood still, quivering in all his limbs. The foam flew from his mouth.

"What do you want with me?" he

said. "My flesh is not nice to eat and my milk isn't sweet and I have no wool for you to cut off."

"I want to borrow your four legs," said Two-Legs. "You were boasting of them yourself. Come up! Stand still now! If you're good, I won't hurt you."

He wound the rope round his arm and came closer and closer. He patted the sweating horse, then suddenly caught hold of his mane and swung himself upon his back. The horse reared and plunged and kicked his hind-legs high in the air and tried, in every way, to get rid of his rider. But Two-Legs held on to the mane and the rope with his hands and gripped tight with his legs and kept his seat for all the effort it cost him. Gradually, the horse became quieter

again and then Two-Legs patted him on the neck:

"Now go after the cow!" he cried.

He pressed his heels into the horse's flanks and gave him a smack. Then they flew in a rousing gallop over the meadow. The cow did not even attempt to run away, but stood staring in amazement at that wonderful sight. Before she had collected herself, the sling was round her neck and Two-Legs proudly rode home with his capture.

When they reached the tent, he sprang from the horse, patted him and thanked him. But he made no show of taking the noose from the horse's neck.

"Won't you let me go?" asked the horse.

"No," said Two-Legs. "But I'll do

better for you. You shall now drink from the spring and then you shall have the juiciest grass to eat that you ever tasted. After that, you shall lie down and reflect that you are now in my service and that you can spend the remainder of your days free of all cares, without the very least anxiety, if only you will be faithful and willing and do the little bit of work that I shall require of you."

He fed the horse and fastened him to the door of the tent. The cow stood tethered close by.

"Shall we see if we can get loose?" whispered the horse, when night came and Two-Legs was asleep.

"No," said the cow and shook her head. "I sha'n't run away again. I accept my lot. It was a terrible sight to see him on your back. He is the

master of us all. No one can resist him."

But the sparrow flew round the forest on her swift wings:

"Two-Legs has caught the horse. . . . He rides on his back. . . . He has fastened him to his tent. . . . The horse has become Two-Legs' servant."

"Have you heard the latest?" the lioness asked her husband. "Do you mean to let him ride on your back too, when he goes hunting?"

The lion gave a threatening roar.

"He had better just try!" he said.

"He's too careful," answered the lioness, with a sneer. "And you would get out of his way, coward and degenerate that you are!"

The lion laid his head on his paws and said nothing, but brooded dark thoughts.

VII

TWO-LEGS SOWS

Two-legs moved with his herd from one meadow to the other.

The herd increased year by year, as did his family. Mrs. Two-Legs had now borne her husband seven sons and seven daughters, who were all doing well and helping in the house and with the cattle.

And the animals were more and more pleased to be in his service.

The horse carried him when he went hunting and walked beside him when he struck the tent and moved to a new pasturage. He came at Two-Legs' call and neither he nor any

other of the animals thought seriously of running away, so that Trust had an easy job in watching over them. Now and then, they felt an inclination for freedom, especially when they were talking to the wild animals. But it went no further than the inclination.

For instance, one night in the rainy season, the stag came to the tent which Two-Legs had put up to protect his animals.

"Well, you're nice and dry here," said the stag and looked enviously into the tent.

"You're right," replied the sheep. "It is really much better than in the old days, when we used to take shelter under a tree and get drenched all the same."

"Just so," said the cow. "And in

the dry season too it was pleasant to get our good food every day, which Two-Legs had stored up for us, instead of having to go all over the country, as before, in search of a blade of grass."

"But I thought you had to work for it," said the stag. "I have often seen you drudging and toiling for your master."

"One good turn deserves another," said the horse. "For the rest, I can't deny that my presentiments have been fulfilled. All my limbs hurt me terribly after the day's work."

"And so do ours," said the ox and the cow.

The duck, the goose and the hen agreed. But the sheep, shook her fat head, while she went on chewing the cud:

"I can't remember what sort of presentiment I had," she said. "I am well off as I am."

"Are you grumbling?" asked Trust, who was keeping watch and never slept with more than one eye shut. "Shall I call the master?"

The stag took fright and ran away. But the horse said:

"No, do nothing of the sort. He has worked hard himself to-day and is no doubt as tired as we are. It would be a shame to wake him."

Then it grew still in the tent.

But Two-Legs was not asleep in his own tent.

On the contrary, he was wide awake, thinking over things, and his wife could not sleep either, for she was thinking too.

"I am sick of wandering about the

country," he said, at last. "We are no longer young, we have a very large family and sometimes the work makes me very tired."

"Me too," said Mrs. Two-Legs. "But that has nothing to do with it. We are obliged to move about to get the grass we want."

Two-Legs said nothing, for the moment.

He rose and went out into the rain, had a look at his animals and then came back again and sat down in his old place. The lion was roaring outside in the meadow.

"Do you hear him?" asked Mrs. Two-Legs.

Two-Legs nodded.

"Tell me," he said, after a while, "where does the grass come from?"

"You know as well as I do," she

said. "We have often talked of how it scatters its seed and how the seed shoots up between the old withered blades when the rain comes."

"Quite right," said Two-Legs. "And why shouldn't we collect the seed and sow it ourselves? Now, if we pull up all the old grass and take the seed of the kind which our animals like best, we ought to be able to make it grow much thicker. And then we could reap the seed again and sow it again and go on living in the same place year after year."

"Oh, if we could only do that!" cried Mrs. Two-Legs and clapped her hands.

"Why not?" said Two-Legs. "And, if we succeed in this, then we can build a proper, solid house for ourselves and our animals. I am sure

that we can fell the biggest trees with our flint axes, if only we have patience and persevere. As soon as the rain stops, I shall go out and look for a place where we can settle down for the rest of our days."

A week later, the sky was clear again. Two-Legs mounted his horse, took leave of his family and said that he would not come home before he had found what he sought. He did not return till the evening of the third day and ordered them to pack up early next morning and go with him.

When they came to the place, they had to admit that he had made a good choice.

It was easy to see that the ground was good and fertile: everything around grew so fresh and luxuriant.

There was a large, open field and on one side of it was the forest, on the other a meadow which, in its turn, ran down to a great lake, where fish leapt and played. Beyond the lake were the distant blue mountains, which were beautiful to look at and to dream of. Just at the edge of the forest lay a hill, at whose foot a brook flowed. The brook ran into the river, which wound through the meadow, and the river ran into the lake.

And the field and the meadow were full of all kinds of grass and flowers. There were poppies larger and redder than Two-Legs had ever seen. And there were bluebells and carrots, convolvuluses and corn-flowers, thistles and docks and violets and many, many flowers. They grew and

spread themselves as they pleased, for they themselves were the lords of the land.

"This is where we shall settle," said Two-Legs. "We shall build a big, strong house on the hill, with stables for our animals and a palisade outside to keep off those who wish us harm. Let us start without delay. You'll see something, once the house is there!"

He and his sons set to work at once felling trees.

They laboured patiently day after day; but they had to chop hard with their stone axes before the big trees gave way. A great cry of dismay rose up from tree to tree, far into the forest:

"What is happening? . . . What does he want with us? . . . Why

must we die?" whispered the trees to one another.

But Two-Legs and his sons heard nothing and saw nothing. They worked and worked till they had what they wanted. And then they built a strong wooden house on the hill, built two houses, three houses: one for themselves, a stable for the animals and a long, big house for which Two-Legs had a purpose of which he did not speak for the present.

They closed up all the chinks with moss. And round the whole farm they built a palisade of tall stakes and woven twigs, which made a good wall to protect them against their enemies.

"That's that," said Two-Legs. "Now to work."

He told his wife to sew a leather bag for himself and one for each of the family. Then they went to the field and the meadow and filled their bags with seed of every sort of grass that they wanted to sow.

"Won't you have a few of my seeds?" asked the poppy, shedding her scarlet petals. "I have thousands of them in my head and I am the prettiest in the land."

"You may be pretty," said Two-Legs, "but I have no use for you."

"You've passed me by," said the violet, modestly.

"You're very sweet," said Two-Legs, "but you're not of any use to me."

"You're forgetting me," cried the thistle. "I am the proudest and strongest in the whole meadow."

"But I am the toughest," cried the dock.

"Mind you take none of their seed," said Two-Legs to his family. "Our animals don't eat them."

So they went home with full bags and out and home again, until they had heaped up a mighty store.

"Now we will prepare the ground," said Two-Legs. "Come, little horse, and lend me your strength, as you have done before."

He made a plough, harnessed the horse to it and drove it across the field, step by step and furrow after furrow. He rejoiced when he saw the earth turn under the stone blades of the plough.

"What's the meaning of this?" said the poppy and was forthwith ploughed over.

"It's no use," cried the thistle. "Our seed will come up and tease you."

"We'll see about that," said Two-Legs.

Then he told his family to cut off all the thistles and throw them away. And, when he had ploughed as much as he pleased, he took the grass-seed which they had gathered and sowed it in the good, fresh earth.

"Now we must wait for the rain," he said, "and see how things go."

And the rainy season came and things went as Two-Legs had hoped.

Little green shoots sprouted all over the ploughed field, all alike, all grass of the kind which the animals loved. Here and there, it is true, a thistle appeared and a poppy, but most of it was good grass.

"Look!" said Two-Legs, gladly.

"Now we only want the sunshine and then it will grow."

The sun came and the whole field was a lovely green carpet that grew so that one could see it grow from day to day.

One morning, the stag came to the edge of the forest and beheld all this with amazement. Then he shouted into the forest to his family:

"Come here! Here's the finest field of grass you've ever seen in your lives! Hurry up and come! I've started grazing already."

"You've started grazing, have you?" cried Two-Legs and came rushing up with his spear. "Out of this, you thief! Do you imagine that I have sown corn in the sweat of my brow for you to eat? Get out of it! This field belongs to me!"

The stag fled as fast as he could into the forest. But the sparrow flew round and told the news on every hand:

"Two-Legs has taken a great piece of land which no one is allowed to touch. He called the stag a thief when he tried to graze on it!"

VIII

TWO-LEGS ENJOYS LIFE

WHEN the time came, Two-Legs filled the house which he had built for a barn with the produce of his field. And the harvest was hardly gathered before he began to think of next year.

He ploughed a new field and another and sowed them. The year after, he cleared a part of the forest and tilled that.

And so he went on, year by year, until he had cultivated the land as far as he could see from his house on the hill.

Round the house he had planted a

garden with the fruit-trees and herbs which he had a use for. The fields lay in long, even strips, each with its own sort of grass or corn. The whole was fenced in and Two-Legs was hard upon any who destroyed his work or stole his property.

It looked as though he were the lord of the earth. No one dared set himself up against him. His herd increased from day to day and the wild animals fled far away as soon as they saw a sign of him or his. In the depths of the forest, however, and under cover of the darkness and whenever they felt safe from him, they talked of the old days when they themselves were the masters, of the shame that it was that he should subjugate them so and of their hopes of better times.

"He throws stones at a poor bird that picks a grain of corn in his field," said the sparrow.

"Yesterday he drove me out of the hazel-hedge round his garden," said the squirrel.

"He shot an arrow into my left wing because I took a lamb," said the eagle.

"He has driven me right out of the forest," said the wolf. "He told me that all the game belonged to him and that, if I dared touch it, he would persecute me and my cubs to the ends of the earth, if need be."

"Perhaps he'll take it into his head to-morrow to say that all the meadows are his," cried the stag. "And where are we to graze then?"

The thistle, the poppy and the bluebell pressed close against the

hedge. The violet hid herself in the ditch. And the stinging-nettle stood gloomily and angrily outside Two-Legs' garden-fence.

"Are we any better off?" asked the thistle. "We have been driven from home and have to sit here against the hedge and look on while the silly grass spreads all over the field. We are at his mercy; he can take our lives any day he pleases."

"He has planted some of my sisters in his garden," said the violet.

"And some of mine," said the poppy. "But that's not liberty."

"Prick him, Thistle!" said the tall oak.

"I did and he struck me with his stick," replied the thistle.

"Sting him, Nettle!" said the oak.

"I did," said the nettle, "and I came off no better than the thistle."

In the corn, however, a glad whisper ran from one end of the field to the other:

"It is we . . . it is we . . . it is we . . . it is we that reign in the land now. . . . We are good. . . . We are useful. . . . You others are nothing but weeds."

"Hear them, the cowardly dogs!" said the thistle.

"We can do nothing," said the bluebell. "But why don't you big trees fall down on him and crush him and his brood?"

"That's a ticklish matter, falling down," said the oak. "But have we not a king in the forest to protect us? Where is the lion?"

"Yes, the lion. . . . Where is the lion?" they all cried.

But the lion was not there and did not come.

Two-Legs sat at home in his garden, under a big apple-tree, surrounded by all his family.

He cast his eyes over his fields, on which the corn waved, and up into the apple-tree, which hung full of delicious, yellow fruit. One of his sons had just come back from the lake with a couple of big fish. Another was hunting in the forest: now they heard his call and he stood at the edge of the wood with a fat roebuck over his shoulders.

A third was busy making a plough: he wanted to improve upon the old one. And all the rest were working at one thing or another. The girls were busy in the kitchen or turning the mill-wheel.

"We have had luck on our side," said Two-Legs to his wife. "Every-

thing thrives and grows under our hands. And our children will do better than we and their children better still. . . . I hardly dare picture the might and glory which our race may yet achieve."

"Yes," said Mrs. Two-Legs. "Things are going well with us. Help me to remember to strew a little corn for the sparrows, when the bad time comes."

"I sha'n't forget," said he. "We have such plenty now, that we can afford to give these little thieves a helping hand. And I like to hear them twittering when I get up in the morning."

IX

THE OLD ANIMALS TAKE COUNSEL

THE complaints of the wild animals increased daily.

"One no longer knows what one dare do and what not," said the mole. "Yesterday, my cousin was throwing up earth, as our family have done ever since they existed. At that moment, he was caught and killed by one of Two-Legs' sons, because the mole-hill appeared in the middle of one of his flower-beds."

"His daughter killed my wife, because she thought her ugly," said a young spider. "Not that my wife was nice to me. She wanted to eat

me immediately after the wedding and I had a narrow escape. But, apart from that, she was the most inoffensive person under the sun and really never hurt a soul. Except the flies, of course."

"He took away my wife and planted her in his garden," said the hop-vine.

"And he throws me out if I show the least, tiny green shoot," said the gout-weed.

"He shuts us up in hives," said the bee.

"He hunts us by clapping his hands together and hitting us with cloths," said the moth.

"He locks us up and fattens us and eats us," grunted the pig.

"He sets traps for us if we try to get a morsel of food," said the mouse.

"He is the master of us all," said the stag. "We have no one to complain to. We have no king. The lion is no longer the ruler of the forest. He kills us with his claws when he is hungry, but he makes no attempt to defend us."

While they were talking, the lioness came slowly up and stood in their midst. They sprang up in alarm, but she lay down quietly and said:

"Do not be afraid of me. I sha'n't hurt you. I have hardly eaten a mouthful this last week for grief. The same cares oppress me as yourselves. And it is worse for me, because my husband ought to have protected us against these strangers and doesn't. The disgrace, for that matter, concerns me personally."

"The lion must help us! The lion

must set us free!" they all cried together.

"The lion does nothing," said the lioness sadly. "He lies at home in our lair, staring and staring before him. But now listen to what I have to say."

They all gathered round and listened.

"We are all concerned," she said. "Each one of us, without exception. I have taken in all that I have heard and seen of Two-Legs and I know his character and his plans as though he had confided them to me. He wants to subdue the whole earth. He and his children intend to reign over us all, whether we submit or not."

"That is true!" cried the animals.

"Yes, that is true," continued the lioness. "Let none feel safe! The

most powerful animal and the tallest tree: if he have not laid them low to-day, their turn will come to-morrow. The lowest vermin and the sorriest weed: they know not on what day he may need them nor when they are in his way; and then their last hour has struck."

"Yes, yes!" they cried.

The mighty oak waved his gnarled boughs in assent, the stag sorrowfully drooped his antlers, the worm whispered his "Yes!" in the earth and the bees shook with fear.

"Yes," said the lioness. "To him we are either useful or injurious. If he thinks a flower pretty, he fences her in; if her scent offends his nostrils, he tramples her underfoot. If a tree stands where he can sleep in its shade, he lets it grow. If it stands

in his way or if he has a use for its wood, he chops it down. If he is able to use an animal, he catches him and makes him his slave. He dresses himself in his skin, eats his flesh, lets him do his work. He does not stop when he has had his fill, as we do. Greedy as he is, he catches animals and gathers fruit for many days, so that he may never suffer want."

"That's so, that's so!" cried the animals, in chorus.

"Wait a bit!" continued the lioness. "There is more to come. He does not hunt fair, like ourselves. He does not go after his prey on his own legs. He rides at it on the back of the horse, whom he has compelled to carry him. He does not catch it with his claws, does not kill it with his teeth: he has a curious weapon, which

flies through the air and brings death to whomsoever it strikes."

"We all know it!" cried the stag.

"It has whistled past my ear!" said the wolf.

"It hit my wing!" said the eagle.

"He does not drink the blood as we do, does not eat the meat as we do," continued the lioness. "He roasts it at the fire; he always has fire in his hut. He has done violence to nature: we knew fire only when the lightning struck an old tree and set it alight; he strikes two stones against each other till the sparks come or rubs two pieces of rotten wood till they catch flame."

"True, true!" cried the animals. "He has subdued fire."

"He does not pluck the fruits in the forest when they are ripe," said the

lioness. "He cultivates the plants for which he has a use and roots out the others. Give him a free hand and he will transform the whole earth. No herbs will be let grow but those which he can employ. No animals will be let live but those which serve his use or pleasure. If we want to remain alive, we must become his servants."

"Hear, hear!" cried the animals.

The lioness paused and all was still. They heard Trust bark a long way off.

"Listen to the dog," said the lioness. "His first servant. Now he helps him watch over the others."

"The dog has betrayed us! Let us kill the dog!" they cried.

The lioness raised her paw and silence prevailed again. Then she continued:

"Do you remember the night when we met here in this same meadow, when the new animals had just arrived? There were some who warned us: they were the horse and the ox and the sheep; the goose and the duck agreed with them: now they are all his subjects. Their presentiments did not deceive them. But do you not remember how the two new animals looked when they lay here asleep? A couple of poor, naked wretches: we could have killed them without trouble, had we wished."

"We could! We could!" cried the animals.

"But we didn't!" said the lioness. "And now they are the lords of the forest. Do you know whence their power comes? It comes from the animals whom they have subdued. If we

could take those animals from them, then they would be just as poor and helpless as before. Two-Legs' power consists in this, that he can make others work for him. If, therefore, you take my advice, you will try to get his servants away from him. I propose that we send some one who will endeavour to talk them into their senses. Surely, we have only to appeal to their sense of honour and to remind them of the days when they wandered at liberty in the forest! Who will undertake the mission?"

"Do you go yourself!" they all cried.

"No," said the lioness. "I had better not. It would not be wise. There is blood between their race and mine. They might remember this; and then my words would be in vain. It should

be one from whom they have never had anything to fear."

They discussed the matter for some time and then it was resolved that the fox should be the emissary. He was at odds, it was true, from the old days, with the goose and the duck and the hen; but there was no one better at hand.

And so he sneaked off: none knew so well the shortest and most secret paths in the forest. He promised to bring back an answer as quickly as possible. The animals lay down to rest in the meadow and whispered together. In the midst of the circle lay the lioness and stared silently before her with shame and wrath in her eyes.

When the fox reached Two-Legs' house, he met Trust, who was going

his night rounds to see if there were any foes about.

"Good-evening, cousin," said the fox, slyly. "Out so late?"

"I might say the same to you," replied Trust. "I am keeping watch for my master. You're hardly out on so lawful an errand."

"I have no master, certainly," said the fox. "And it's not so long since you yourself were a free dog in the forest. You ought to become so again. Come down with me to the meadow. The other animals are gathered there. They will forgive you for entering Two-Legs' service and look upon you as the good dog that you were, if you will open the door so that the captive animals may escape."

"There are no captive animals here," said the dog. "We are all well

off and we wish for no change. If I am Two-Legs' servant, I am also his friend. So run away back as quick as you can to those who sent you."

With that, the dog turned his back on the fox and went in through the little hole that was left in the fence for his use. But the fox stood waiting a while, to see if none of the others appeared. And it was not long before a fine gosling stuck her head through the hole.

"Good-evening, little missie!" said the fox. "Please come a little closer."

"I dare not," said the gosling. "I am not allowed out at night. And I should so awfully like to get away. I am so frightened of Two-Legs. He roasted my mother the other day and ate her."

"Shocking!" exclaimed the fox.

"You mustn't stay a moment longer in this murderer's den. Come out to me and I will take you to a place where you will have nothing to fear."

"If only I dared trust you!" said the gosling. "But I have ten sisters. I can't leave them in the lurch."

"I don't think you had better wake them to-night," said the fox. "Young ladies are so talkative and, if the dog or Two-Legs discovered your flight, it would be all up with us. You would be roasted forthwith and I should come in for a certain unpleasantness too: that goes without saying."

"That is true," said the gosling. "But will you promise me to fetch my sisters another time?"

"I give you my word that, from to-day, I will come every night and fetch one of the young ladies, until

they are all rescued," said the fox. "That is, as far as lies in my power. There may be obstacles."

"How kind you are!" whispered the gosling. "And I who thought that the wild animals were such terrible monsters! That's what I have always been told. They said I must be particularly careful not to go into the forest, lest the worst of evils should befall me."

"Sheer calumny!" said the fox. "All the animals in the forest are angels. I have never once heard of any one being roasted there. But come now, before we are perceived."

"I'm coming!" said the gosling.

She waddled through the hole and, that very instant, felt the fox's teeth in her throat. She was just able to give a scream and then she was done

for. But, the next moment, Trust was there. The fox let go the gosling and struck out with his teeth as best he could. But he was the weaker and the dog gave no quarter. Not until the fox lay dead on the ground did Trust go back through his hole again.

Meanwhile, the animals were lying in the meadow and waiting.

"The fox has played us false," said the stag.

"Of course, he has been caught and is entering Two-Legs' service like the rest," said the nightingale.

But, at daybreak, the sparrow came flying up, breathlessly.

"The fox is dead!" she said. "He is lying on the hill outside Two-Legs' house. I saw him myself. There's a dead goose lying beside him."

Then the lioness rose and all the other animals with her.

"The fox went on his own business," she said. "He fell in his own hunting. We can trust nobody now."

Then, with bowed head, she went slowly home.

X

THE LION

It was one night, some days after the animals had held their meeting in the meadow.

The lion lay in his lair, as was his custom, and stared with his yellow eyes. His spouse was sleeping or pretending to sleep. At every moment, she heaved a deep sigh. All was still in the forest.

The lion knew well what his consort's sighing meant. He knew what the animals had talked of that day and all the other days in the forest. Not one of their complaints was unknown to him; not one of the taunts

uttered against him had escaped his ears. Not for a moment had he been in doubt as to the feeling in the forest towards the king of beasts.

Nor had he forgotten which of the animals had spoken of him most slightingly. He had imprinted the names of more than one on his memory and he would know how to be even with them when the time came and order was restored in the forest. Every day, he had to bear his consort's gibes, but he no longer heeded them. She would have to beg his pardon and yield him her love and admiration once again. His children would honour him, as they had honoured him before and even more. He would be remembered in the history of the forest as the monarch in whose reign the kingdom had incurred a

great danger and misfortune, which he had finally overcome.

The lion rose and went slowly through the forest.

"The king of beasts is out hunting," said the hedgehog, creeping under the bushes.

"See how thin he is," said the bat. "His skin is hanging loose on his bones."

"It is many nights since he went hunting," said the owl. "His eyes are glaring with hunger."

But the king of the forest was not thinking of hunting. He went, as though in a dream, in the direction of Two-Legs' house. A deer darted across his path and he did not see her. Slowly he went on until he came to the open space where Two-Legs' house stood on the hill.

He went straight up to it, leapt quickly over the hedge and lay down in some bushes that grew at the door. He there lay concealed. No one could see him: only his yellow eyes gleamed through the leaves. And one bound would bring him to the door.

Two-Legs slept restlessly that night.

He tossed about on his bed of skins and, when at last he fell asleep, Trust began to bark so loudly that he had to get up and see what was happening. He had closed up the hole through which Trust used to get out, because the goose had lately escaped that way and fallen a prey to the fox.

"What is it, Trust?" he asked.

The dog kept on barking and leapt

up against him. Two-Legs opened a little shutter and looked out and listened. But there was nothing to see. Then he told the dog to lie down and went back again to bed. But now he heard the horse kicking in the stable and the ox began to low and the poultry to cackle. There was no hearing a word for the noise. He had to go out again and found all the animals shaking, as though greatly frightened. The horse stood in a violent sweat and the hens and ducks and geese fluttered restlessly round in their roost.

"What can it be?" he said.

He opened the door and stepped out into the night, unarmed and naked, as he had risen from his bed. At that moment, there was a rustling in the bushes. The lion sprang forwards, but Two-Legs just had time

to enter the house and bolt the door behind him.

He stood for a moment in great alarm and did not know what to do.

Through a little hole in the door, he saw the lion lying outside in the bushes, with his eyes fixed on the door, ready to leap. The yellow eyes glittered with rage. Two-Legs understood that the fight was now to come that had been so long delayed.

He thought first of waking his sons, slipping out through the other door and attacking the lion in the rear. But they slept in different parts of the house and the day was already breaking in the east and, while he was gone to fetch them, one of the family might easily go out and fall a prey to the king of the forest.

While he stood and reflected, his fear left him.

He considered that he was man enough to kill his foe unaided. He silently took the best two of his spears, carefully felt their edges, drew a deep breath and then opened the door.

The lion was not there.

Two-Legs looked from one side to the other and could not discover him. But he was an old and experienced hunter and did not doubt but that the lion was lurking in ambush. So he stood quietly in the doorway, with every muscle taut, ready for the fight that must come.

Then he heard a soft rustling in the bushes and, at that moment, saw the animal's eyes there among the leaves. He knew that there was no time

to lose: if the lion sprang first, it was too late.

He flung one of his spears and struck the lion in the eye. The lion uttered a roar of rage and then the other spear pierced his heart.

All the inmates of the house were now out of bed and came running up.

There lay the dead lion, a great and splendid sight. Trust barked at him and wanted to bite him, but Two-Legs drove him away:

"After all," he said, "he was the king of the forest. But now let it be declared all over the earth that he is dead and that the realm is mine."

Then they stripped the lion's hide and hung it on a tall pole, which they set up in the middle of the field, so that it could be seen from far and wide.

"The lion is slain!" cried the sparrow from door to door. "Two-Legs has murdered the king of the forest. His skin is hanging on a pole outside the house: I saw it myself."

Then all crowded up and saw it. From the edge of the forest, full of fear they peeped at Two-Legs' house and the birds stared down from the sky.

"Now all is over," said the stag.

And so it was.

But, in the course of that day, the orang-outang came to Two-Legs, who was sitting outside his house.

"Good-day, cousin," said the orang-outang.

Two-Legs looked at him, without answering.

"Ah, you may have heard," said the orang-outang, "that I have spo-

ken ill of you. I will not deny that I have been a little careless in my talk. But you yourself know, when one meets with poor relations, one is afraid of hangers-on. One has children of one's own and it is not easy to make both ends meet in these hard times. Besides, you once caught me a blow with your stick; so we can cry quits."

"What do you want?" asked Two-Legs. "I have neither time nor inclination to listen to your drivel."

"Now don't be hasty, cousin," said the orang-outang and sat down beside him. "I acknowledge your success. You have been lucky. It does not enter my head to deny your ability. You have managed things splendidly. That little business with the horse was really very smartly done.

And, now that you have outwitted the lion . . ."

"What do you want, you ill-omened brute?" said Two-Legs.

"I want to join forces with you, cousin," said the orang-outang. "We two as partners ought to conquer the world."

"Are you mad?" said Two-Legs. "What should I do with such a ridiculous, stupid beast as you? You're no more use to me than a pigeon. Away with you! Or else I'll give you a thrashing which you won't forget in a hurry."

The orang-outang retreated a few paces, but did not give up the game:

"You should think it over, all the same, cousin," he said. "However clever you may be, I can be of use to you still. I should be a good inter-

mediary between you and the animals. I can do things that you can't; and what I can't do I can easily learn. Up in the apple-tree where I sat, I have watched you and studied the way you went about your field; and I have already picked up many of your tricks. You must know that . . ."

Two-Legs stood up and caught the orang-outang by the arm:

"Come outside!" he shouted into the house. "I want to show you something!"

They all came out and stared at the ape.

"This fellow wants to go into partnership with me," said Two-Legs. "He's not reasonable. He says he has already learnt my tricks. Let's put him in a cage; then we can amuse

ourselves with his tricks, when it's raining."

The orang-outang protested, but to no purpose. Two-Legs held him tight and soon they had built a cage and put him into it.

"There's none like one's own people for meanness!" said the orang-outang, as he sat on the floor of his cage, catching his fleas.

XI

MANY YEARS AFTER

It was many, many years after.

And it was not in the forest in the warm lands, where the sun shines stronger than here and the rain falls closer and all animals and all plants thrive better, because the winter does not stunt their growth.

It was in a large village out in Jutland.

It was fair-time and the village was full of people and cattle. On every side stood booths with wooden shoes and tin goods, cakes and toys and all sorts of wares. There were refreshment-tents and a dancing-hall. There

was a great peep-show, there were two merry-go-rounds, there was a place where the fattest lady in the world was exhibited. In another place, for twopence, you could see a tiny little dwarf. Then there were white mice and performing fleas, numbers of barrel-organs, all playing at one time, so that you could hardly hear yourself speak for the din, and drunken peasants and boys playing practical jokes.

But the most remarkable thing of all was hidden in a large tent in the middle of the market-place. This also could be seen for twopence; and, if you wished to know what it was, you had only to listen to the man who stood outside and shouted in his hoarse voice:

"Walk up, ladies and gentlemen,

walk up! Only twopence for grown-ups, children half-price! Here's something that's never been exhibited in this village before, but that's appeared before all the kings and royal families in the world. It's a king himself that I have the honour of introducing to you: the king of beasts, ladies and gentlemen, the terrible lion! He lives in darkest Africa and is so powerful that he can kill an ox with one blow of his paw. He has two lambs for his breakfast every morning. If he were to escape from his cage, he would do away with you all in less than no time. But you need have no fear, ladies and gentlemen! The lion is in his cage behind thick iron bars. There he stands and glares in his bloodthirsty way, at twopence for grown-ups, children half-price!

Walk up, ladies and gentlemen! Hurry up, before it's too late! Never again, in all your lives, will you see half so fine a sight at so cheap a price!"

He shouted like this all the time. A crowd of people stood outside the tent staring. Many went in. When they came out, they told the bystanders about the lion inside. Then more went in and so it continued all day long.

The lion's cage stood at the back of the tent.

It was a low and dirty cage. On the floor lay some filthy straw and a few bones. The side turned to the spectators consisted of thick, rusty iron bars. In the furthermost corner lay the lion, with his head resting on his paws. His yellow eyes stared with a dull expression at the public. There

was straw in his tangled mane; and he was terribly thin. Now and again, he gave a nasty hollow cough.

The man stood, with a long stick in his hand, talking and explaining. The visitors to the fair stared round-eyed at the great beast that lay there so quietly. Sick and feeble as he was, they could see, nevertheless, that he was the lion, the king of beasts, and they felt cold in their backs at the thought that he might break loose. But, when he did not make a single movement, one of the spectators said, at last:

"I believe he's dead!"

Then the showman pushed his long stick through the bars and poked the lion with it. The lion slowly turned his head and looked at him, but gave no further sign of life. Then the man

poked him again and again and, at last, the lion sprang up and gave such a roar that the tent shook with it and the people fell back in affright.

"He ate his former owner," said the man. "I bought him of the widow. He is terribly fierce and intractable. He's dreaming of his native land, you see, where he used to hunt in the wild forest and all the animals honoured and feared him. But now you must go, please, so that others can come and see the most extraordinary sight ever exhibited in this village. Walk up, ladies and gentlemen! Only twopence each! The king of the forest, the terrible lion!"

And so it went on until late that evening. Not until the market-place was empty and there were no visitors left to listen to him did the man shut

up the tent, after counting the day's takings.

"This has been a bad day," he said and gave an angry look at the lion. "You haven't really earned your supper!"

He flung a small piece of half-rotten meat into the cage. Then he shut the door and locked it and went to the inn, where he sat and drank and caroused till the early morning.

The lion did not touch the putrid meat. With his head on his paws, he lay staring at a little train-oil lamp that hung in the tent and flickered feebly. Suddenly, he heard a sound and raised his head and looked about him.

"Can't I have peace even at night?" he said.

"It's only I," replied a squeaky lit-

tle voice. "I have been locked in by accident. I want to get out! I want to get out! My mistress is dying of fright for me."

It was a tiny little dog, with a collar and bells round his neck and an embroidered rug on his back. He tripped to and fro, whined and cried and scratched at the door, but no one heard him. All was silent in the market-place outside.

"Well, I never!" said the lion. "You're the dog; I can see that. Gracious me, what a sight they've made of you!"

"I want to get out! I want to get out!" whined the dog.

The lion had laid his head on his paws again and looked at the dog.

"What's the use of whimpering like that?" he asked. "No one's hurting

you. I couldn't eat you if I wanted to. The iron bars are strong, believe me. I used to shake them at first. I have to travel in my cage from place to place and let people look at me for money, submit to their scorn and teasing and roar when I am told to, so that they may shudder, while feeling quite safe from my teeth."

"Let me out!" cried the dog.

"I can't," replied the lion. "But I am not so contemptible as you. I am here against my will, caught in a trap. You voluntarily entered Two-Legs' service, betrayed your fellows and helped him against them."

"I don't know what you're referring to," said the dog. "I know no one called Two-Legs. I am in service with human beings. My mistress is a great baroness and she will die of

fright if I don't come home to her soon."

"Just so," said the lion. "Human beings, that's what Two-Legs' confounded descendants call themselves. They have subdued the whole earth. There is hardly a place left where an honest lion can go hunting in royal style. I know the whole story: it has been handed down in my house from father to son. I heard it all, the night before I was captured, in the desert to which the men had driven us: how Two-Legs and his wife came naked and unarmed to the forest; how my ancestor protected them; how they gradually outwitted all the animals: you alone entered their service of your own free will. The others they caught and tamed and dulled their senses until they no longer knew how to lead

the lives of free animals and resigned themselves to slavery. Finally, Two-Legs killed my ancestor with his spear: yes, yes, I know the whole shameful story."

"I don't," said the dog. "And I don't mind if I never know it. I only know that I have a cosy little basket at home with my mistress and that she pets and kisses me and gives me the loveliest food. I want to get out! I want to go home!"

The lion made no reply, but thought to himself:

"When I lie here in my cage, where I shall soon die of sorrow and coughing, it is a comfort to me to see how wretched Two-Legs' descendants have grown. For he was lithe and slender and fair to look upon: he was an animal! But these people here!

One can hardly see a morsel of their bodies, they are so wrapped up. Two-Legs could bound through the forest and climb trees: these people here can scarcely stir hand or foot. He was a fighter: and it's really amusing to watch the terror in these fellows' eyes when I get up and move to the bars or when I roar. They shake like aspen-leaves, though they know that I am only a wretched prisoner."

"I want to get out, I want to go home!" whined the dog.

The lion rose and went to the bars of his cage. He lashed his lean flanks with his tail and opened his jaws so that his terrible teeth gleamed. The little dog trembled with fear before his yellow eyes.

"And you!" said the lion. "Ha, ha, ha! It's better to be a captive lion in

a cage than a miserable little lap-dog, with bells and a rug!"

He gave such a roar that all the people in the village started up in their beds. Then he lay down at the farther end of the cage, turned on one side and slept.

The little dog shivered and whined until some one came and let him out.

THE END

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